

Claims:

1. Apparatus for deep fat frying of food items comprising:
a cooking vessel including first and second opposed upright end walls each
having respective upper and lower edges, first and second opposed
upright sidewalls each having respective upper and lower edges, and a
bottom wall extending between the end walls and the side walls to
provide a vessel adapted for retaining a quantity of a cooking medium
therein, said bottom wall including first and second sloping wall
surfaces diverging and downwardly extending from an elongated central
raised portion, said central raised portion longitudinally extending
between said end walls; and

a heater support assembly including a frame and an elongated heating element,
said frame being complementally configured to said cooking vessel for
resisting horizontal movement of the cooking vessel relative to the
frame and for removably supporting said cooking vessel above said
heating element with the central raised portion being in spaced
relationship directly above and in vertical alignment with said elongated
heating element.

2. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said
frame includes an upright retaining member adjacent said cooking vessel side walls and
end walls when said cooking vessel is received in said frame, and wherein said cooking
vessel side walls and end walls are complementally sized and configured relative to said
frame whereby said frame receives said cooking vessel inside said retaining member
only with said central raised portion positioned in vertical alignment with said elongated
heating element.

3. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 2, wherein said
upright retaining member of said frame is a lip substantially circumscribing said
cooking vessel side walls and end walls when the cooking vessel is received in the
frame.

4. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein said
bottom wall of said cooking vessel includes at least one trough which is vertically lower
than said sloping wall surfaces, is elongated and substantially parallel to said central
raised portion, and is positioned between an outboard edge of one of said sloping wall
surfaces and one of said side walls so as to be outboard of said heating element when
said cooking vessel is received in said frame.

5. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 4, wherein said bottom wall of said cooking vessel includes an upright barrier wall extending upwardly from said trough and downwardly from said outboard edge of said one of said sloping wall surfaces.

5 6. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 5, wherein said bottom wall of said cooking vessel includes a second trough extending parallel to said one trough and along an other of said side walls so as to be outboard of said heating element when said cooking vessel is received in said frame.

10 7. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said heating element is an elongated gas burner.

15 8. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said heating element is adjustably mounted to said frame for positioning in one of a plurality of different locations at different vertical spacing relative to the central raised portion of the cooking vessel when the cooking vessel is received on the frame.

15 9. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said central raised portion is an elongated ridge extending between said end walls and is located substantially equidistant from said side walls.

20 10. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said sloping wall surfaces have a slope relative to the horizontal of between about 4° and about 30° .

25 11. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 10, wherein said sloping wall surfaces have a slope relative to the horizontal of between about 10° and 20° .

12. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said cooking vessel includes a perforate grate positioned in an elevated position relative to the outboard edge of the sloping wall surfaces to define a cooking zone thereabove.

30 13. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 12, wherein said cooking vessel includes inwardly projecting support ledges for retaining said grate thereon.

14. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein said support ledges are mounted on said side walls at a height above said outboard edge of the sloping wall surfaces whereby said grate rests on said central raised portion.

35 15. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said side walls are substantially perpendicular to said end walls and wherein said side walls have a length and said end walls have a width, the length of said side walls being greater than the width of said end walls.

16. Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 15, wherein sloping wall surfaces have lowermost outboard edges and the lower edges of the side walls and end walls extend below the lowermost outboard edges of the sloping wall surfaces.

5 17. A cooking vessel adapted for deep fat frying after positioning over a heating element and for receiving a quantity of a cooking medium and at least one food item therein, said cooking vessel comprising:

a pair of upright opposed end walls each having a respective upper edge and a respective lower edge;

10 a pair of upright opposed side walls oriented substantially perpendicular to the end walls, each of the side walls having a respective upper edge and a respective lower edge; and

15 a bottom wall extending between the end walls and the side walls to provide a vessel adapted to contain a cooking medium therein, said bottom wall including first and second sloping wall surfaces each having a respective outboard edge and an elongated central raised portion extending between said end walls, said first and second sloping wall surfaces extending outwardly and downwardly from said central raised portion toward respective side walls.

20 18. A cooking vessel as set forth in claim 17, wherein said bottom wall includes a pair of longitudinally extending troughs oriented substantially parallel to said central raised portion and extending below said outboard edges of said sloping wall surfaces, said troughs each including an upright barrier wall opposite and inboard of said side walls and extending downwardly from said outboard edges of respective ones of said sloping wall surfaces.

25 19. A cooking vessel as set forth in claim 18, wherein said lower edges of said side walls and end walls extend below said outboard edges of said sloping wall surfaces.

30 20. A cooking vessel as set forth in claim 18, including a plurality of retaining ledges coupled to at least one of said side walls or end walls, and a perforate grate supported on said retaining ledges and said central raised portion.